


Applying for the Mandela Washington Fellowship: Writing a Personal Statement

When you apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship, you will submit a personal statement  and other essays to introduce yourself to the selection panel. In this part of your application, you can highlight what you want reviewers to know about you.

In any personal essay, it is important to catch the reader's attention with an original, honest statement. When space is limited, it is important to compose a concise answer that highlights the work you are most proud of. Make sure you are responding directly to the question being asked and including examples or anecdotes if relevant.

Here are a few tips to help you write strong personal statements for your application:

1. Do not procrastinate! Start preparing your essays. It is easy to underestimate the time and difficulty involved in developing your answers.
2. Remember, the written application is the only information the selection panel will have when deciding the candidates who will progress to the interview stage. Do not assume the reviewers know anything about you or the topics you are writing about.
3. Reviewers will be reading a lot of applications. Stand out in the crowd by making your responses interesting! One way to do this is to begin your statement with an attention-grabber such as a quote or a story.
4. Provide concrete examples that pertain to your life, work, goals and experiences.
5. Be concise — do not use a lot of unnecessary words.
6. Check for spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes.
7. Make sure your ideas are coherent throughout the essay. The person reading your essay needs to understand how your thoughts fit together.

You also may be interested in [Applying to Be a Mandela Washington Fellow: Building Your Resume](#).

Sources: Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts; the American Medical Association in Chicago

Applying for the Mandela Washington Fellowship: Building Your Resume

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A successful candidate for the Mandela Washington Fellowship demonstrates an ability to get things done. Take a marketing approach to your resume that will command the ultimate amount of

attention. Think about how you want the person who reads your resume to think of you.

In preparing your resume, remember three important tips:

1. Keep your answers brief.
2. Write in the third person (do not use the pronoun "I").
3. Proofread your resume for grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Here are a few tips to help you prepare the information you will need for the required format of the Mandela Washington Fellowship resume:

- **Professional Experience:** What professional experiences have you had? Make a list of paid or volunteer positions and summarize your work in these positions to give an instant picture of the breadth of your work or volunteer background.
- **Education:** Have you received any type of formal education beyond secondary school? If so, make a list of the education and training you received from established universities, colleges or trade schools. Include the dates you attended these schools, what you studied, and what degrees or certificates you earned.
- **Professional Training:** Did you receive professional training outside of an established educational institution? Name up to five relevant professional certifications and/or training courses you completed, including the type of training or the name of the certification and the city and country where the training occurred.
- **Community and Volunteer Work:** In addition to your professional experience, do you perform unpaid work in your community? Make a list of your volunteer activities with local charities or NGOs and summarize your work with these organizations.
- **Honors and Awards:** Have you been recognized for your efforts in something that you have done? List what honors or awards you have received, from which organizations, and for what type of work.
- **Professional Skills:** Think about the skills you have acquired over time. What languages do you speak? Are you proficient in computer and software skills?

You also may be interested in reading [Get Your Resume Noticed](#).

President Obama Hosts Town Hall with Young African Leaders

President Obama engaged with young African leaders at the Washington Fellowship Summit, announced the "Mandela Washington Fellowship," answered questions and unveiled educational resources created exclusively for the YALI Network. Watch the town hall here:

[Read the full transcript.](#)
